

THE ADVOCATOR

A quarterly newsletter for Self-Advocates

VOL. 1, ISSUE 3

9.25.2019

Self Advocacy

I have some thoughts about working. Employment helps build self confidence and experience. The more you learn to do and help yourself, the more your confidence will grow. For example, a few years after I started working I asked several times for a raise (when I deserved it). That experience helped build my self advocacy skills. It also taught me to always speak up for myself.

Earning my own money has also helped me in several ways. It has helped my self esteem because I don't have to ask my mother for money. I also learned (and am still learning) to budget. I have to ensure that I have enough money to pay rent, pay my car payment, buy my groceries, and pay other bills. Speaking of paying rent, living in your own place helps you become more independent. You will increase your independent living skills and you will be included in the greater community. Some community activities you may enjoy are attending church, going shopping, going bowling, and attending various social events. It's a great feeling and accomplishment to be able to do things on your own and make your own choices about where and what to eat, what to wear, where to go, who to spend time with, and who to live with. We all need some form of help from time to time, even just to talk things over to help make decisions. It's ok to ask for advice or help and it makes you stronger!

As I look back on my life and my career, I can see how the different jobs I've held and the skills I've learned have helped mold and develop me to do the job I'm doing today. Over my life I've learned to drive, speak up for myself, travel, take cruises, (had help obtaining my passport the first time but no trouble renewing it), airplane trips, and work trips by myself. I also live independently and drive my own car. I hope these tips have been helpful!

Warm regards,

George Neal

**WORK HARD & BE
PROUD OF WHAT
YOU ACHIEVE**

believe-to-achieve.tumblr.com

Consumer Corner

Hello!

I recently returned from the Arc of Alabama DisAbility Conference in Birmingham, AL. There were approximately four hundred people in attendance, the largest group to date! I was able to participate in several good breakout sessions on Tuesday. I was honored to present a session called Living Fully Independent, Having A Robust Community Life. My presentation was live on Facebook. It can still be found on the Alabama Care Facebook page.

— George Neal, Photos courtesy of Holly McDaniel





Ten Steps to Being an Effective Self-Advocate

Sometimes you may feel as if you have lost control over your life, your rights and your responsibilities. Regaining your sense of control by successfully advocating for yourself will give you back the hope and self-esteem you need to work toward recovery.

Following is an excerpt from [WRAP Plus](#) (Copeland, M., Dummerston, Vermont)

1. Believe in Yourself

You are a unique and valuable person. You are worth the effort it takes to advocate for yourself and protect your rights. You can do it! You may need to work on raising your self-esteem to really believe in yourself and become your own best advocate.

2. Know Your Rights

You are entitled to equality under the law. Some of us who have had mental health challenges erroneously believe that we do not have the same rights as others. I did for a while. I allowed people I did not know well and did not trust to make decisions for me and take control of my life. I now have systems in place so if I am not able to make good decisions for myself, others of my choice will make them for me.

3. Decide What You Want

Clarify for yourself exactly what you need. This will help you set your own goals and help you be clear to others about what it is that you want and need for yourself.

4. Get the Facts

When you advocate for yourself, you need to know what you are talking about or asking for. The Internet is an excellent source of information. However, you will need to check its accuracy by looking at several different references to see if they agree. Check with people who have expertise in what you are considering. Ask others who have issues similar to yours. Check references in the library. Contact mental health agencies and organizations for information and support. What it is that you want and need for yourself.

5. Planning Strategy

Using the information you have gathered, plan a strategy that you feel will work to get what you need and want for yourself. Think of several ways to address the problem. Ask supporters for suggestions. Get feedback on your ideas. Then choose to take action using the one that you feel has the most chance of being successful.

6. Gather Support

In advocating for what you need and want for yourself, it is helpful to have support from family members, friends and other people who have similar issues.

7. Target Efforts

Who is the person, persons, or organization you need to deal with to get action on this matter? Talk directly with the person who can best assist you. It may take a few phone calls to discover which organization or person can help, or who is in charge, but it is worth the effort. Keep trying until you find the right person. Maybe the right person is your spouse or another family member. Perhaps it is the head of the local housing agency, your doctor, a case manager, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, or a state legislator.

8. Express Yourself Clearly

When you are asking for what you need and want for yourself, be brief. Stick to the point. Don't allow yourself to be diverted or to ramble on with unimportant details. State your concern and how you want things changed. If the other person tries to tell you reasons why you cannot achieve what it is you want for yourself, repeat again what it is you want and expect until they either give it to you, help you get it, or refer you to someone else who may be able to give you what you need. If you feel this may be difficult for you, you may want to role-play different scenarios with a supporter or a counselor.

9. Assert Yourself Clearly

Don't lose your temper and lash out at the other person, their character or the organization. **Speak out, asking for what you need and want and then listen.** Respect the rights of others, but don't let them "put you down" or "walk all over you."

10. Be Firm and Persistent

Don't give up! Keep after what you want. Always follow through on what you say. Dedicate yourself to getting whatever it is you need for yourself.



THE SELF-ADVOCACY TREE

Original design by Erica-Rachael Fiel

GET TOGETHERS (top left)

POLITICAL ACTION (top right)

NEWSLETTERS (left side)

PRESENTATIONS (right side)

WEBSITES (bottom left)

ADVOCATING (bottom right)

Branches
Topics the group is interested in

Trunk
Principles and mission of the group

Fruit
Actions taken to achieve goals

Roots
People who participate as self-advocates

Technology School
Health & Fitness Transportation
Places to Live Real jobs
Romance Fun Support
Friendship
Respect us
Contribute
Listen to us
Community first
Support each other

Erica imagined this tree to help people see how everyone can work together.

Produced by The Riot at HSRI based on work at the Virginia SALT Forum in April 2010. Visit The Riot at www.theriotrocks.org

Upcoming Events:

3rd Annual Governor's Job Fair
for People With Disabilities
Thursday, October 3, 2019
10AM—2PM
Crampton Bowl Multiplex
220 Hall Street
Montgomery, AL 36104

For information on self-advocacy presentations, please contact:

George Neal
334-353-7032
George.neal@mh.alabama.gov